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CUBAN INDEPENDENCE.

S P E E C H

OF

HON. DAVID [✓]TURPIE,

OF INDIANA,

25/12/71
IN THE

SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES,

TUESDAY, APRIL 5, 1898.

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WASHINGTON.

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Mr. W. A. Smith

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SPEECH
OF
HON. DAVID TURPIE.

The Senate having under consideration the following resolution:

Resolved, That the Committee on Foreign Relations of this body be directed to report at the earliest practicable moment, and without waiting for the concurrence or advice of any department of the Government, what action, if any, in view of the loss of the battle ship *Maine*, and the destruction of the lives of 266 American sailors, and in view of the well-known deplorable condition of affairs in the Island of Cuba, is required from the Congress of the United States to sustain and vindicate the honor and dignity of this nation, and to meet and answer the obligations of humanity imposed on this Government as the result of the condition of affairs in said island, and that said committee report by bill, resolution, or otherwise, as it may deem most expedient—

Mr. TURPIE said:

Mr. PRESIDENT: I have great regard for the continuity and consistency of public action and of my own conduct in participating therein. I voted more than two years ago for the acknowledgment of belligerency to the Cuban insurgents. More than a year ago I voted for and addressed the Senate in favor of the recognition of the independence of the Cuban Republic. This morning I am of the opinion in respect to our relations with the Kingdom of Spain and its former dependency, the Island of Cuba, that the consecutive steps of belligerency, recognition, and intervention, heretofore forborne by the United States, ought now be massed at once and taken together as the only reparation for the wrongs inflicted upon this Government and upon mankind by the offenses of the Spanish monarchy.

We are now witnessing the fourteenth year of the war for Cuban independence, for it must be recollected that this war was begun in 1868 and lasted ten years. The truce which then took place did not occur by reason of the defeat of the revolution, or, in other words, by the suppression of the rebellion, or by the surrender of the Cuban armies, or the cessation of armed resistance against the Spanish Government.

The pacification of the treaty of Zanjón occurred by reason of a mutual agreement between the authorities of the Cuban Republic of that time and those of the Spanish Government upon the island of Cuba, by which, under the terms of the treaty then made, it was solemnly agreed by Spain that within ten years—a long time, a very long time—that within ten years, such period being given wherein to carry out the promised reforms, there should be substantial self-government and local autonomy for the Cuban people established in that island, and that African slavery in the island should be abolished. Those were the principal provisions of the treaty of pacification made at Zanjón in the winter of 1878 at the conclusion of the first period of the war for Cuban independence.

During the whole ten years afterwards no step was taken in execution of this mutual convention, except one—the abolition of slavery; and that was only taken in 1884, after an intimation from the Government of the United States and certain European powers that that part of the convention of Zanjón must be complied with and executed.

It was under that mediation that slavery was abolished in the Island of Cuba. That is the only provision of the compact which was undertaken and carried out by the Spanish Government. Every other was delayed and postponed. It was said by the royal authorities, "We have not had time. We have had a variety of interests to confer about. We have had great questions in the island to consider. Give us yet more time beyond the limit of ten years." Seven years were not granted; but seven years were taken by the royal authority, by the Spanish Government, by the cabinet at Madrid, to carry out the remaining stipulations of the treaty of pacification at Zanjón, and seven years were taken in vain.

No other action was taken by the Spanish Government. The same absolute oppression, the same exclusion of Cubans from all offices of trust and profit, the same exclusive Spanish control of courts, the same denial to the Cubans of justice in those courts, the same oppressive system of taxation more severe than under any civilized Christian government in the world, was continued up to the last moment of the seven years, when the second period of the war for Cuban independence became flagrant, the second period of the same war waged for the same reasons, largely between the same persons, making now the fourteenth year of that struggle.

Mr. President, the lapse of time, and the lapse of time alone, emphasizes the duty of the American Congress to intervene, and to intervene in such a manner as to make the pacification of Zanjón a fact accomplished, and to declare and maintain the independence of the Republic of Cuba. For Spain was to forfeit her sovereignty if she made default in this treaty. There is now a republican government in that island. It has maintained itself for fourteen years in arms. It has an active corps of 35,000 men, well armed, drilled, and equipped. It has another corps of the same number, 35,000 men, equipped and drilled, liable at a moment's call under the command of their president, but not armed by reason of the want of guns and ammunition, the result of that blockade which we have hitherto maintained in the interest of Spain, creating an embargo against the revolutionists.

For the maintenance of the authority of the republic—a government with a president and cabinet like our own, a government with a well-established revenue, a government with courts having civil and criminal jurisdiction, a government having a system of taxation, a postal system, and every other element of civil national life—that government, sir, ought to be immediately recognized.

Mr. President, we have not only had this long-continued war and this maintenance of the Republic of Cuba, but we have had upon our side the same prolonged continuance of efforts in aid of what are called our own neutrality laws. It has cost us millions of money to take and maintain the position of neutrality; it has cost us millions to shut away from the armies of the Republic of Cuba the supplies of ammunition which might perhaps have ended this struggle before now if we had not observed this neutrality.

Again, sir, we have during this long period, during the whole fourteen years, been subjected to indignities, insults, and outrages upon American property and upon American persons which, had they not been committed in the name of a friendly Government, had they not been committed under the auspices nominally of a Government with which we were in amity, would have been in themselves cause for armed intervention at our hands.

Above all, sir, during these last twelve months wherein events have quickened, the scenes in the drama of the Cuban revolution have changed and shifted rapidly. The cruel policy of concentration—determined, avowed, deliberately planned and executed by the home Government of Spain—has been pursued against the people of Cuba.

We have seen 400,000 of those people driven from their homes, placed between the double dead line of the bayonet on one side and famine on the other. Heretofore we have read of revolutions, of the French Revolution, the guillotine, and the Reign of Terror, but in the Cuban revolution we have had the reign of death for twelve months—death by famine, involving the slowest, the most lingering, the most excruciating tortures known to human suffering and mortality.

Two hundred thousand have perished for the want of the necessities to the maintenance of life. They have perished by reason of hunger. "Give us this day our daily bread." Such is the prayer of humanity to the All Father of the world, and He has never wearied in granting food to His children. It is only the evil genius of the Spanish monarchy which would dare to deny men, women, and children—which would dare to deny to childhood, to motherhood—the bare necessities of life. It is only the Moloch of the Spanish monarchy which dared to say, "Suffer the little children to come unto me, that I may slay and devour them."

This policy of concentration, sir, contrary to Christianity, contrary to the law of nations, contrary to the rules of civilized warfare, a crime against the human race, has characterized this period of twelve months. I feel very certain in saying beyond all contradiction that if Spain were now to attempt to enter upon any island or any portion of this hemisphere and found a new colony, with the view of governing it under her sovereignty and dominion, the whole people of the United States would rise as they did in the case of Venezuela to support the President against that attempt; and I do not see that there is any difference in principle between allowing the Spanish monarchy to repeople the desert wild which it has made in the Island of Cuba with a new population and the founding of a new colony elsewhere upon this continent. It is dangerous to our peace and safety; it is a gross and unjustifiable violation of the Monroe doctrine; it is much more without excuse, much more without justification, than the action of Great Britain with respect to the Venezuelan frontier.

Besides this general course of events, marked with so much horror and barbarity, there are particular incidents which accentuate the demand that we shall heed the voice of our neighboring republic and the voice of humanity, asking us to come over and help them, to rescue them from this impending ruin.

There is what is called the De Lôme affair, the affair of the Spanish minister—De Lôme, a typical representative of that polished address and duplicity which have marked Spanish diplomacy in every era of the world, a typical representative of that

accomplished hypocrisy which can meet its victim smiling in the face and behind his back with jeer, sneer, and hisses.

With what a serious and earnest air the late Spanish minister approached the President of the United States and the Secretary of State to lay before him the papers and to explain to them in detail the system of Spanish autonomy for the future government of the Island of Cuba! Yet at the same time that accomplished emissary was turning his head over his shoulder saying to his friends in old Spain: "This autonomy; it is a game, it is a ruse, it is chaff, thin, worthless chaff; good enough to give to the people and to the President of the United States."

But the mask was torn from his face. The features of this hypocrite were revealed in all their native deception and deformity. Then he made his exit. Then he took his departure. But, sir, his resignation was accepted by the Spanish Government. He was subject to no reprimand or reproof. He is yet persona grata in the court of the Queen Regent at Madrid, with a deliberate insult to the Government and people of the United States, an insult avowed and countenanced by the Government which sent him here as its representative, witnessed by his presence.

Then, again, we have what is called the incident of the *Maine*, the instant and stealthy destruction of a public war vessel of the United States upon a peaceable and not unusual visit to the harbor of Havana, the harbor of Havana and the whole island being at the time under the most rigid martial law which has ever been proclaimed in any part of Christendom. Sir, that destruction, that deplorable loss, occurred without the slightest precaution having been taken by the Spanish authorities to prevent it, and without any effort to detect or to discover the actors in the crime after its accomplishment.

If I recollect aright, sir, the destruction of the *Maine* occurred during the régime of autonomy. The system of Spanish autonomy in Cuba had been inducted, inaugurated, and was in full operation at the time of the destruction of the *Maine* and the loss of the gallant men who perished with her. We are told that the colonial and royal officials attended the burial of the victim martyrs of the *Maine*. Were they real mourners?

Yes, Mr. President, as real as De Lôme, as sincere as the Spanish minister. The crape they wore hid a secret, as the waters of Havana Bay hid the mine and wire that wrecked the *Maine* and her murdered crew. Here are insults, here are incidents and injuries which can not be repaired except upon such conditions as that they never can occur again, such conditions as shall forever place the harbor of Havana and Cuba, with all its land and waters, beyond the control and dominion of the Spanish Crown.

Sir, there may be the acknowledgment of the independence of the Cuban Republic; there may be armed intervention and still be no war, and yet be preservation of peace. It rests with Spain. We say to her, whether we declare it in one way or another, "Surrender Cuba; withdraw your naval and military forces; depart in peace." Spain has not earned that; is scarcely worthy of it. She asks us, "What are you willing to sacrifice for peace; what are you willing to sacrifice for Cuban independence?" "We have given up the *Maine*; we have given up the slaughtered heroes who once trod her decks—all these are martyrs, glorious martyrs, in that cause—if you will depart in peace;" for I believe that the loss of Havana and Cuba would be a stroke of such serious detriment to the purse, pride, and power of the

Spanish monarchy that we might be willing to consider it as a reparation for the wrongs and losses which it has inflicted upon the Government and people of the United States. But I would have no other reparation.

So, then, there is that day of repentance, there is that alternative of peace, and it may be that Spain's last thoughts about Cuba shall be her best, for it is to her a very grave alternative. The Spanish monarchy has in that island and the subjects who have acknowledged and supported it, millions of credits depending upon this determination.

The Spanish monarchy has millions of movable property the value of which depends upon this determination. The Spanish monarchy has archives, records of courts, of deeds, of conveyances, worth an immeasurable sum, the custody of which depends upon the decision of that alternative. It does bring the cabinet at Madrid to consider, and to consider upon great grounds, the difference between a peaceable departure and surrender of her ancient possessions in this hemisphere and a military capitulation at the end of the war. It does present a great alternative.

Sir, in the old times, from 1861 to 1865, there used to be a great deal of discussion—I have heard it in this Chamber—as to what was the cause of the war. I think there was a unanimous conclusion upon our side that slavery, if not the cause of the war, was so nearly related to and so closely connected with it that peace could never be established without its final extinction and abolishment. What is the cause of the war now pending in the Island of Cuba? What shall be the cause of the war anticipated between the United States and Spain?

There is only one cause. That is the assertion and maintenance of the right of the Spanish Crown to its sovereignty and dominion in the Island of Cuba. That is the cause, and until that dominion and sovereignty of Spain in the Island of Cuba are extinguished, obliterated, there will be no peace; there can be no peace; there should be no peace. It is upon that alternative, and only that, that peace may come, in my judgment; may lawfully, righteously come to us as well as to them. The abandonment by Spain of her government in the island, with all its appended military and naval forces, is the only thing which can give us indemnity for the past and security for the future.





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